1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

give a name even to those which they say are of no use to them. Unfortunately, in many cases I was unable to identify the plants of which the native names were given to me.[1] Sometimes the same term will be used for a number of plants of similar habits of growth, e.g. *wanis*, fairly translatable by our generic word 'grass', and *kurits*, used for a hanging vine or creeper, often as a prefix attached to another word. There is a generic word for 'tree'—*no'on*, which also means wood, especially firewood (*kuip no'on*, to cut firewood, one of the women's daily tasks).

Some of the trees appear not to be indigenous. Mrs. Hadden told me that her father, Mr. Parkinson, the anthropologist, who was the first white man to live in this region (about forty years ago), introduced some of the citrus fruits and other useful trees, which have since spread rapidly throughout the area.

The natives cultivate coco-nut palms, areca palms, and bananas, as well as taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) and other vegetables (some account of their food plants is given in Chapter VIII). Bread-fruit trees and canarium almonds are highly prized, the position of each one is known, and they are always spared when fresh ground is cleared for a new taro garden. Some of the trees which go to make up the uncut bush yield a hard timber which is found useful by the resident whites for building and for piles, especially such as withstand the ravages of salt water. But the difficulty of transportation renders these of no commercial value. The natives use them for house-posts and other purposes, but prefer the soft-timbered trees for their canoes. The most striking objects in the bush are huge trees with enormous flanges buttressing their trunks, and the aerial roots of the banyans, which serve the natives as ridge poles for their huts. Several different kinds of palm and of bamboo are used for a variety of purposes. A big carophyllum tree is a frequent landmark on the lee shore, affording welcome shade under which the men sit mending their nets and the women making hoods or baskets or playing with their babies. A large fallen trunk on the beach at Petats was a favourité gathering-place for all. Parts of the shore are covered with mangrove swamps, which make landing impossible.

Of smaller growth, there are several kinds of croton and hibiscus,

[1] For the identification of some of them I am indebted to the authorities of Kew Gardens. A list of these will be found in Appendix III. Others I have recognized from the description given by Guppy.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

PREPARATIONS FOR THE *WATAWUTʃ*

881 The *watawutʃ* is considered by far the most important of the three ceremonies connected with the *upi*. It is looked forward to with great eagerness by everybody. In contrast to the *wapi*, it is held in the village, not in the bush, and there is no taboo on the presence of the women, which is, indeed, essential to its success. All the boys who went through the *wapi* ceremony together must attend the same *watawutʃ*. Not to be able to do so is considered a very great misfortune.

881 565 824 202 Several months before the ceremony, the *tsunaun* of the village in which it is to be held sends messengers to all the other villages in the group, carrying a number of strips of bamboo about 6 inches long, and a bunch of *win* leaves split into thin strands. A strip of bamboo is left with the *tsunaun* of each village, and one of the *win* strands at each house where there is in the family a boy wearing the *upi*. This is a sign that they must set aside a pig for the *watawutʃ* ceremony. Large areas of bush are cleared and planted with taro, which is also reserved for the *watawutʃ*. The women plant and tend this just as they do taro intended for everyday consumption.

881 346 621 313 824 When the time for the ceremony approaches, preparations are begun for building the 'long house' (*tobar tʃan*) for the novices. The *tsunaun* of the village in which the ceremony is to be held details certain portions of the structure to be provided by the various villages of the group. Special importance is attached to the *pa'i*, the horizontal ridge-poles supporting the roof. These must run the full length of the house, and it is no easy matter to find and bring in poles (consisting of the aerial roots of the banyan) of the required length. Those for the *tobar tʃan* at Kurtatchi, which were brought in while I was there, were provided by the village of Tabut. A length of fibre string had previously been sent from Kurtatchi as an indication of the length required. They measured 65 ft. 8 in.[1] They are brought through the bush by the *upi* boys themselves, assisted by the older men, both *amro* and *kwigin*. All the women must keep out of the way while this is being done. Marotē had promised to accompany me on a visit to Ruri on the day when the *pa'i* were brought, but when she heard this was

[804] 881 313 824

[1] For the ordinary dwelling-house the *pa'i* would measure not more than about 40 feet.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

to be done she refused to go, saying it was dangerous to walk about on that day. The *pa'i* were brought to within about half a mile of the village. They were covered with leaves, and from them depended all sorts of creepers and ornamental plants, especially the split leaves of the *win* palm, of which the *upi* are made. They were laid upon forked sticks set up in the ground to a height of about 3 feet. There they remained for three days, until enough opossums had been caught and smoked to provide a feast following their arrival in the village.

On the afternoon of the third day, just before dusk, a crowd of men and *upi* boys went out, to the accompaniment of the sound of the *mabū* and much blowing of conch-shells, to meet the Tabut people, who were bringing in one *pa'i*. There were several rushes, and pretence of fighting, and much shouting when it finally reached the village and was placed upon a stand that had been prepared for it in the central space, near the *tobar*. Then all the men and boys from both villages congregated in front of Pinari's largest hut. Here they held a short *kōma*. Then they went back to the *tobar*. Presently the people of Ruri came up with the areca-palm planks they had prepared for the making of the verandah of the 'long house'. These were also swathed in leaves, and were received with another mock fight, followed by another *kōma*. Then the people of Sēlō, a group of villages farther along the road to the west, came up with two more *pa'i* and were received in the same fashion. After this all the men and boys sat round and ate pig and opossum and ceremonial pudding. The materials for chewing the betel-mixture were distributed in large quantities. There was a general air of tension about the whole proceedings, and Pinari was careful to impress upon me the importance of the occasion.

All the women were obliged to stay inside their huts, with the entrance closed, while all this was going on. They kept up a perpetual howling until the *kōma* was over and the men had settled down to eat pig and to chew the betel-mixture. The howling is done because their husbands and sons are engaged upon a very dangerous proceeding, and they are afraid that some of the *upi* boys will die.

The boys wearing the *upi*, for whose benefit all these preparations were being made, held a *kōma* later in the evening, no one else taking any part in it. It did not last very long (Pl. 30*a*).

The *pa'i* remained on their stand, covered with leaves and

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

creepers, for eight days. They were then stripped of their coverings by the *upi* boys, and left to dry in the sun till they should be required for the building of the 'long house'.

The *tartaras* (rafters) for the long house were also provided by the people of Tabut. These were brought in some days later, with renewed shouting and excitement, covered with leaves and the split leaves of young *win* palm in the same manner as the *pa'i*. But the occasion was regarded as much less important than the bringing in of the *pa'i*, and there was no *kōma* connected with it.

From the time when the *pa'i* are cut, up to the time when the *watawutf* takes place, it is accounted a very serious offence for any man in any of the villages concerned in the ceremony to have sexual intercourse with any woman other than his wife or wives, a proceeding ordinarily regarded with unconcern. It so happened that while the people of Tabut were working on the *pa'i* for the *watawutf* to be held at Kurtatchi, a man from one of the hamlets comprising the village of Tabut broke this taboo. The woman became pregnant, and was made to tell the name of her lover. As soon as this became known at Kurtatchi, some of the men of that village took a pole and tied some fibre to it; this they left in front of the house where the offender lived, as a sign that he had been found out. He was then obliged to pay a fine of a pig to the Kurtatchi people. Two of the Kurtatchi men went over the next day and brought the pig back; it was cut up and cooked immediately, and the *pa'i* were smeared with its fat. This was done in order to obviate the harm that might otherwise have ensued from the breaking of the taboo.

The next matter of importance was to arrange for the making of the special *upi*, to be used at the *watawutf*. These are elaborately ornamented with a cut-out pattern laid on over the usual *win* leaves. The cut-out is made of the same *win* palm leaves, dyed with a special dye, the secret of which is known only to the mountain people, from whom the leaves are purchased ready dyed. When, shortly before, I had gone upon a trip into the interior, I was charged by Pinari to bring back a supply of these from the Kunua people, who were experts in the art of dyeing them. This I did, and was also able to obtain from a Kunua native the secret of the dye, after promising that I would not disclose it to the coast people, a promise which it was not difficult to keep, as they had no idea that the mountain people had let me into the secret. The

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

the taro garden with their loads, or from the reef with their little baskets of shell-fish. They begin by fetching firewood from the bush; huge loads are carried on their backs by means of slings of banana fibre hung from both shoulders after the manner of a ruck-sack. The small girls must help in this work, each according to her carrying capacity; they must also bring water. The meal does not differ greatly from that taken in the morning, except that more is eaten. Its main dish is invariably taro, either boiled or roasted, sometimes supplemented by yams, sweet-potato, or green leaves, or bread-fruit when in season. For the much needed 'relish' there will be fish, or shell-fish, or perhaps opossum, if any have been caught during the day.

Meals may be taken either inside or outside the hut, but are most frequently eaten on the women's verandah. They are shared by all the occupants of the hut, without rule of precedence, men and women eating together, and are times of pleasant chat and laughter, especially when the family sits at leisure after their hunger has been satisfied and discusses what is to be done that day, or what has been done, if the day is over. A man and his two wives, who usually occupy adjacent huts, will often share their meal on the verandah of one of them, with the children of both in great evidence. The adolescent girls eat with their parents, and the smaller fry hover about, scrambling on and off the verandah, getting such portions of food as their elders hand over to them. But the family circle is not complete, for the boys wearing the *upi* may not join it. They come to the door at the men's side of the house to have their food handed out to them, then they must take it away and eat it on the verandah of their *tobar*, or where they please, so long as they avoid the proximity of the women. It will be remembered also that persons standing to each other in the relationship of *wagun*, *watʃitʃio*, and *tuwan* may not eat in one another's presence (see Chap. II), and that if a woman eats in the presence of her daughter's husband she must do so behind her hood.

Utensils used in the preparation and consumption of food are simple and few. Nowadays an occasional enamel saucepan, and perhaps a cup and a plate or two, will be seen in the villages, brought in by some returned plantation labourer. But most families do their cooking with the aid of native pots, of which they will possess at least two or three of different sizes. For

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

workers often erect temporary shelters (*tanū*) of banana leaves on the spot and remain there for weeks at a time, thus saving themselves the long walk to the garden in the morning and back again at night. They bring down a minimum of household goods, a sleeping-plank and a cooking-pot, and often do not trouble to construct more than a roof and a back to their shelter.

In the olden days, when stone implements were the only tools available, large trees were brought down by burning them at their base. Now that trade axes and knives can be obtained the trees are felled a few feet from the roots, leaving the stumps standing. Trees with a food value, such as canarium almonds, are always spared. The undergrowth is cut down and left lying where it falls till it is dry; eventually it is made into large heaps and burned, except for the thick stems of the bush banana plants which contain so much moisture that they will not burn. These are arranged in orderly piles, kept in place by stakes on each side, and left to rot.

In the ordinary way taro is planted as a routine matter without any ceremonial attaching to the operation. But there are certain 'medicines' which may be used if desired. Some of these are the sole prerogative of the women, some may be used by both sexes. I have a considerable number of these 'prescriptions' in my collection, some of the more interesting run as follows:

Burustē (*Eranthemum* sp.).

Chew scrapings from the roots of this plant with the betel-mixture, spit on hand, rub shell-knife with which taro stalk is trimmed before planting, and knife (trade) with which ground is weeded. Rub also on taro. Your taro will be good when other people's is bad. Used only by women.

Magor (a mixture, described on p. 475).

Chew some *magor* with betel-mixture. Spit it on to a piece of stick which grew in the taro garden, then spit on the cut end of the stalks that are to be planted, and say: '*Ar wayas nor ū nū so nuts tsan.*' 'You and I spit on the taro, now it is large.' Used only by women.

Tsiub (plant unidentified).

Chew roots with *magor* and betel-mixture. Spit on hand, rub on stalk of taro before planting. After doing this a man must not go fishing, and a woman must not go to the shore or hunt for shell-fish on the reef. If this prohibition is not kept the taro leaves will shrivel and dry up. The time during which it is observed was not to be ascertained.